

would end the current practice of exempting all mandatory spending and tax cuts assumed in the budget resolution from the pay-as-you-go rule, and extend the Senate pay-go rule currently set to expire in 2008 through fiscal year 2015.

The bill would also reinstate sequestration, across-the-board spending cuts, to enforce pay-go and discretionary spending limits. Legislation that exceeds fiscal year 2005 discretionary spending caps, as well as mandatory spending and tax legislation that would increase the deficit, would trigger sequesters. The bill also expresses the sense of the Senate that a statutory discretionary spending limit should be enacted for 2006 to prevent passing more debt on to our children.

The bill would also limit the use of the Senate's fast-track "reconciliation" procedures, which cut off debate after only 20 hours, to deficit reduction legislation. Legislation that would increase the deficit could still be considered in the Senate, but could not be expedited using reconciliation procedures. This would restore reconciliation to its original purpose of deficit reduction, and ensure that any legislation increasing deficits is subject to full scrutiny, debate, and consideration in the Senate.

In addition, the legislation would prohibit the fast-tracking of Congressional budget resolutions that contain a reconciliation instruction that would worsen the deficit. Any budget resolution that includes an instruction to a committee to increase the deficit would be subject to unlimited debate rather than limited to 50 hours.

We must return our Nation to a path of fiscal responsibility. We must put an end to these record deficits and record debt. This legislation presents a clear test of whether we are serious about putting our fiscal house back in order. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

#### THE PASSING OF NEBRASKA'S JOHNNY CARSON

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise to express my sympathy over the loss of Nebraska's Johnny Carson, the 30-year host of the "Tonight Show" and a dedicated Nebraska philanthropist. He passed away yesterday at the age of 79 in his Malibu, CA home.

Johnny Carson was a Nebraska original and an American icon. He elevated the late night talk show to an art-form and he did it with class and fun. Carson will be remembered as a generous individual who was proud of his State.

After serving in the Navy during World War II, Carson attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, UNL, and earned a bachelor of arts degree in radio and speech. As a student, Carson practiced his comedy and perfected his ability to perform card and magic tricks. His experiences at UNL greatly influenced his career in entertainment.

Carson made many significant contributions to Nebraska. Among them a

\$2.27 million donation to a cancer radiation center in Norfolk and last November, he donated \$5.3 million to UNL to help with the renovation of a building where he took classes.

I had the opportunity over the years to meet Carson. In 1967, he returned to Nebraska for the State's Centennial celebration. He was invited by the Governor to headline the gala with his former Omaha radio morning show co-host Harvey Swenson. Swenson was the manager of KLMS radio station in Lincoln, where I worked at the time. Carson came to the station and talked with all of us about his early days in Nebraska radio.

After Carson graduated from high school, his parents moved from Norfolk to Columbus, NE, where I lived. I would occasionally see Carson walking his dogs in Columbus when he would visit his parents during the summers.

America will miss this good man, Johnny Carson. We are all very proud of him—of what he represented and where he came from. I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring Johnny Carson.

#### THE 32ND ANNUAL MARCH FOR LIFE

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, today is the 32nd Annual March for Life on Washington, DC's National Mall. Individuals from all over the Nation will march together in solidarity, despite the bitterly cold weather, in support of the most basic of human rights: the right to life. The March for Life is an important opportunity to demonstrate a firm and clear commitment to preventing abortion and protecting the rights of each unborn child.

Today I met with 35 representatives from Nebraskans United for Life and Creighton University. They are committed to promoting the right to life for all human beings and work tirelessly to ensure that this issue remains at the forefront of debate.

I strongly support the efforts of the National Right to Life Committee. The March for Life is a powerful reminder of the progress that has been made and the work that remains for the pro-life cause.

Above all, we should focus on education, including the encouragement of abstinence and adoption. Communities, churches, synagogues and families must continue to come together to help provide a strong source of support and counsel for young men and women as they become adults.

#### HEALTH CARE

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, rising health care costs and access to affordable health insurance are among the biggest worries Americans face today.

Health care costs are increasing faster than any other basic service in American society. Today, 44 million Americans lack health insurance at any given point during the year, and

between 20 to 30 million of them are chronically uninsured.

My Republican colleagues and I will soon be introducing one of our priority bills for the coming Congress. This legislation, the Healthy America Act of 2005, will bring together an aggressive and innovative set of health care solutions. These solutions build on the already impressive health care record of the last Congress—principally delivering Medicare prescription drug coverage to seniors and making tax-free health savings accounts available to all Americans.

Our bill will include many of President Bush's health care reform priorities, as well as the proposals developed last year by the Senate Republican Task Force on Health Care Costs and the Uninsured, of which I was proud to be a member.

At the heart of this legislation are measures aimed at restraining health care costs, increasing access to care, and improving health care quality.

Toward this end, one of our—and the President's—topmost priorities is comprehensive reform of America's costly, unfair, and chaotic medical liability system. Our bill will ensure fair and rapid compensation to injured patients, reduce frivolous lawsuits, and limit excessive and costly damage awards.

Also especially important, I believe, is the creation of a new national framework for establishing personal electronic health records and for exchanging health information securely and privately. As the new chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee I will be working closely with my colleagues in the coming months to develop legislation that will speed the adoption of standards and enable systems to "talk" to each other—reforms that eventually will save billions of dollars and, potentially, many thousands of lives.

Other critical features of this legislation include a commitment to reforming the struggling small group and individual health insurance markets, expanding the availability of health savings accounts, HSAs, creating targeted tax credits to help Americans purchase private health insurance, and expanding America's Community Health Centers and related facilities.

Mr. President, this legislation will be a solid foundation and a promising beginning as we begin this new Congress. Together with my colleagues and with the President, I will work tirelessly to assure that health care costs, access, and quality are at the forefront of our priorities in the weeks and months ahead.

#### CONFIRMATION OF MARGARET SPELLINGS AS SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for Ms. Margaret Spellings as our new Secretary of Education.

This is a key position at a key time. As I travel around the great State of